



*Local Government Association*

# collaboration between independent and local authority schools:

LEAs' perspectives on partnership and community activities

by Paula Smith, Kirstin Kerr and Sue Harris  
National Foundation for Educational Research

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collaboration between  
independent and  
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LEAs' perspectives on partnership  
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## Executive summary

This research aimed to determine the current status of partnership collaboration between schools in the independent and maintained sectors. In recent years there has been an increasing drive towards identifying and reducing the barriers between the sectors in order to facilitate a more cooperative approach that acknowledges the benefits to be gained from working in partnership with each other. The Independent Schools Council (ISC) recently commissioned a survey focusing on partnership working between schools, by means of questionnaires sent to independent schools. The NFER research aimed to complement that survey by providing information from the perspective of the maintained sector via a questionnaire to Local Education Authorities (LEAs). A questionnaire survey of LEAs was the main source of data and this was combined with data from follow-up telephone interviews.

### Main findings

The questionnaire was designed to examine a number of key areas. The main findings from each area are as follows.

#### *Relationships with independent schools*

- ◆ There was evidence of different types of partnership working. Almost half the respondents mentioned some kind of consultation with independent schools. However, only about one third reported joint partnership activities between schools in the two sectors.
- ◆ The apparent lack of partnership activity between maintained and independent schools could have a number of possible explanations:
  - there appeared to be no main contact person within LEAs to coordinate collaboration between schools in each of the sectors
  - it could be that partnership activity was initiated at school level rather than LEA level and so LEAs were not aware of the extent of this type of collaborative working
  - from discussions with LEA officers it appeared that school constraints, such as timetables and the demands of the curriculum, made partnership activities a low priority for a number of schools
  - there were also misconceptions regarding schools in each sector, which interviewees felt often prevented the development of joint project working.
- ◆ Low numbers of independent schools within LEAs did not necessarily prevent schools from collaborating with each other. Conversely, in some areas there was no partnership working despite fairly high numbers of local independent schools.

one sector

#### *Use of school facilities*

- ◆ In the cases where schools accessed each other's facilities, maintained schools more frequently accessed those of independent schools. However, this was not always the case and a small number of LEA officers highlighted their concern over misconceptions that independent schools were better equipped than maintained schools.
- ◆ The most commonly shared facilities were curriculum facilities (art, music and computer facilities) and sports facilities (squash courts, swimming pools and athletic tracks).

#### *Partnership activities*

- ◆ Where partnership activities occurred, they tended to be funded via non-Government sources.

- ◆ Partnership activities that were financed through Government funding included arts, environmental activities and key skills projects.
- ◆ Where projects were not supported by Government funding, the most frequently accessed sources of finance were schools within each sector or

local authority resources. Projects included initial teacher training activities, management development programmes and collaboration with schools abroad. The most frequently cited benefits were improved communication, greater levels of achievement and the dissemination of good practice.

# 1. Background

There has, in recent years, been an increasing drive by the Government to promote and extend partnership working. The White Paper *Excellence in Schools* (GB. Parliament. HoC, 1997) outlined the Government's vision of an integrated education service. In particular, the publication focused on fostering greater links between independent and local authority maintained schools. It was hoped that the existence of a set of reciprocal arrangements between schools within each sector might provide opportunities for them to access and utilise each other's individual strengths and resources, resulting in mutually beneficial outcomes.

The Government introduced a number of measures to facilitate and advocate partnership working between independent and local authority schools. An advisory group with the specific remit of facilitating links between both sectors and their associated funding was introduced in 1997. This funding allowed schools to apply for grants to enable them to collaborate on projects. The final report of the Advisory group was *Building Bridges: Advisory Group on Independent/State School Partnerships* (DfEE, 1998). The report outlined a number of recommendations that were intended to facilitate and extend partnership working between the two sectors. Subsequently, a Successor Advisory Group was established in 1999 to take the work forward and implement the previous recommendations.

Findings from the Successor Advisory Group indicated the scheme had fostered numerous links between both sectors and had been well received. In September 1999, the Department for Education and Employment

(DfEE) published *Partnerships in Practice: Building Bridges* – a case studies booklet aimed at providing schools with descriptions of first-hand experiences of partnerships funded through the scheme (Bowes *et al.*, 1999). A good working relationship has been maintained between the sectors. This was highlighted by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding, in December 2000, between the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and the Local Government Association (LGA).

In particular, the final report from the Successor Advisory Group indicated some of the positive changes that have taken place, which include access to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses open to independent sector teachers in some areas and the placing of Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) in independent schools for their induction period. There have also been changes in teacher training and the awarding of Qualified Teacher Status in order to bring the independent sector in line with the state sector. The report also recognised the existence of collaborative working outside the realm of Government funding, specifically in relation to ensuring the sustainability of projects once Government pump-priming funding had ceased.

More recently, the Independent Schools Council (ISC) commissioned a survey of independent schools that aimed to evaluate current levels of partnership working between the two sectors. Current information on all aspects of the Independent/State Schools Partnership Scheme can also be accessed through the Department of Education and Skills' website facility.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/buildingbridges/>



This evaluation was commissioned by the Local Government Association (LGA) to complement the ISC survey by focusing on similar areas but from a different perspective – that of LEAs. In this way, it may be possible

to provide a more comprehensive picture of existing collaboration between the sectors. Specifically, this evaluation aims to establish the extent and scope of partnership working between independent and maintained schools.

## 2. Methodology

The survey was administered to all 172 LEAs in England and Wales. In addition a further three LEAs were contacted in the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands. In total 175 LEAs were sent copies of the questionnaire. The survey was sent to the NFER Liaison Officer within each LEA, with a request to forward the questionnaire to the individual with responsibility for partnership activity between local authority and independent schools. The survey was designed to complement the recently commissioned ISC survey and covered the following key areas:

- relationships with independent schools
- shared use of school facilities
- partnership activities not funded by the Government
- partnership activities funded by the Government
- local services used by independent schools.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, respondents were invited to state their job title and to indicate whether they would be willing to be contacted again in connection with the evaluation.

The survey was administered using a paper-based method. No time limit was placed on the return of the questionnaires but individuals were invited to complete them as soon as possible. It was hoped this would allow greater flexibility in completing the questionnaire and increase response rates.

The initial questionnaire was followed by a reminder letter to all non-responding LEAs. Subsequently, a fax reminder was also sent in the hope that this would further improve response rates and provide an opportunity

for LEAs who did not complete the questionnaire to indicate, via fax, whether there was partnership between independent and maintained schools within their LEA at the time of the survey.

In total, 77 questionnaires were received from LEAs, which represents a response rate of 44 per cent. In addition to this a further 12 faxes were returned in response to the reminder, which indicated those particular LEAs had no partnership working. We also received a further six responses either by email or letter. In total, we received 95 responses. In order to supplement the information obtained from the survey, it was also decided to telephone a small number of LEAs who had indicated that they would be willing to be contacted in the future in relation to the evaluation. Sixteen LEAs were contacted, as a result of which we were able to speak with representatives from six LEAs about their partnership activities. We were also able to gain additional information from a deputy headteacher whose school was directly involved in joint project work. Details of the school's involvement in project work had been provided by an LEA respondent who had suggested the school would be willing to be contacted in relation to the research.

The following chapters highlight the main findings from the survey and any relevant, additional information obtained from correspondence with LEAs in relation to the evaluation, together with information from the supplementary telephone conversations. Routing within the questionnaire means that the number of potential respondents for any question varies.

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<sup>2</sup> The findings from this section are not included in this report due to insufficient responses to provide any reliable basis for analysis.

### 3. Relationships with independent schools

Just over half of the LEAs (42) that responded to the survey indicated that they had no partnership working between maintained and independent schools. In addition to this, a further 12 LEAs indicated (11 by fax and one by letter) that they were not aware of any such collaboration. However, 22 of the LEA officers responding to the survey said there was, or had been in the past, partnership activity between maintained and independent schools within their LEA.

There may be several possible explanations as to why the majority of respondents indicated that there was no partnership activity within their LEA. Firstly, it is possible that some of the LEA officers were simply unsure of existing partnership arrangements between independent and maintained schools within their LEA. The questionnaire was completed by individuals with a great diversity of job titles and roles (see Appendix). This could mean that information about partnership activity is channelled via a number of possible individuals and, as a result, is becoming diluted and inaccessible. For example, one LEA officer commented:

*[I] used to be the senior advisor for partnership working and I am now the senior advisor for primary working but my post is still aimed towards looking at partnership working. I also have responsibility for the G and T [gifted and talented] strand.*

As this suggests, one barrier to developing partnerships between the maintained and independent sectors may be that LEAs rarely have an officer with clear responsibility for facilitating and monitoring partnership activities.

In addition, where there is collaboration with independent schools, it may be that this most commonly occurs at school level, rather than LEA level. This may, in turn, result in a lack of responsibility for and therefore

awareness of partnership activity within LEAs. A number of LEA officers made comments that support this suggestion. One, for example, stated 'If there is any sharing it's on a school-to-school basis, so not something I know about.' This view was further corroborated by a chief advisor from another LEA, who, reflecting on the current level of partnership working within his/her LEA, commented:

*This is not a major or strategic activity for the LEA/schools but it is possible that individual schools are involved in small scale collaboration, of which the LEA has no knowledge.*

The size and geography of LEAs could also be, in part, responsible for the limited development or paucity of partnership activities. Opportunities for independent and maintained schools to liaise could be impeded if there were very few or no independent schools within the catchment area. This would create a physical barrier for such arrangements to occur. This is examined in more detail at the end of this chapter.

There was also some evidence, from the additional telephone interviews, to suggest that misconceptions between maintained and independent schools could militate against the formation of partnership activities. One LEA officer commented that a maintained school struggling with pupils in year 8 decided to work with an independent school, only to find that it shared similar problems. Initially, there was an assumption that independent schools have fewer problems than maintained schools, but having overcome this, the schools were able to work together effectively to address a common problem, swapping and sharing ideas as equals.

One LEA officer felt that there were problems in establishing good working

relationships between independent and maintained schools. In particular, he/she felt there was 'an issue over openness, honesty and trust on both sides'. The respondent felt there was 'a lot of talking to do' and that they needed to 'break down perceptions and barriers'.

A number of LEA officers said they had regular contact with independent schools and relationships were more commonly described as cordial (if formal), as opposed to purely formal (see Table 3.1).

Of the 77 LEAs who responded to the survey, 19 had, at some point, been approached by independent schools with proposals to work closer together (see Table 3.2). This represents about a quarter of the total number of respondents. It is interesting that 13 respondents (about one in six) were unsure whether independent schools had presented plans to work closer together. As previously highlighted, one way forward when establishing partnerships is for LEAs to make clear who within the LEA has responsibility for liaising with independent schools.

LEAs were also asked specifically whether they shared information on the following:

- Educational Development Plans (EDPs)
- school performance data
- target setting.

**Table 3.2** Number of LEAs that had been approached by any independent schools with a proposal to work closer together

Response	Number of LEAs
Yes	19
No	44
Not sure	13
No response	1
<b>N = 77</b>	

*A single response item*

Approximately a third of respondents indicated that they shared information about EDPs, and a quarter shared information about school performance data. Liaison concerning target setting was cited by only three respondents.

LEA officers were, in addition, invited to list any other areas on which they consulted with independent schools. Nineteen respondents provided further examples of areas on which they had consulted with independent schools. Of these, the most frequently cited area was In-Service Education and Training (INSET), mentioned by seven LEAs, with arts development and advice on National Curriculum assessment each being commented on by two LEAs. The following additional areas were each cited by only one LEA officer:

- child protection

**Table 3.1** Relationships between LEAs and independent schools

Relationship	Number of LEAs			
	Yes	No	Not sure	No response
Formal but cordial	35	22	6	14
Purely formal	26	25	7	19
Regular contact	20	41	3	13
Joint projects	17	40	6	14
No contact	11	31	4	31
Integrated in strategic plans	4	54	3	16
<b>N = 77</b>				

*A series of single response items*

- curriculum development
- health and safety issues
- international baccalaureate
- leadership and management
- pedagogy
- planning for the foundation stage
- special educational needs policy
- youth work.

This list indicates a wide variety of areas in which partnership activities with independent schools could be developed. Seventeen respondents said they were currently involved in joint projects with independent schools and four had integrated independent schools into their strategic planning (e.g. in EDPs). One LEA officer also reported that they had worked with independent schools through their Local Learning and Skills Council (LLSC), as part of a review of 14–19 provision in the area.

The extent of LEA and independent school relationships also depends on the way they are defined. About two-fifths of LEAs communicated with local independent schools to exchange ideas and share information, often covering a wide variety of topics.

One LEA officer was keen to promote this way of working and indicated that a possible route to establishing greater levels of partnership working between independent schools and LEAs was for 'LEAs to give access to training courses for teachers from the independent schools and also access to the LEA's circulars.'

However, fewer respondents were aware of partnership working at school level: only about a third of respondents indicated there were partnerships between maintained and independent schools in their LEA. To what extent this reflects the actual number of partnership activities taking place at a school level is, however, open to question. It may

be, as noted earlier, that individuals within LEAs are simply not aware of developments at school level.

This particular finding highlights the possible potential for LEAs to become more involved in the initiation of collaborative activities between independent and maintained schools, building on their existing relations with independent schools.

### **Example 1**

One of the LEA officers interviewed revealed the types of collaboration between his LEA and the independent schools in the area. The LEA communicated with independent schools on a range of issues, both at individual pupil level and at a whole school curriculum level. In particular, the LEA had a formal arrangement to deliver advice on quality assurance. Independent schools were also encouraged to access the LEA's training programme and a couple of private schools in the area subscribed to other LEA services such as advice on finance. Collaboration did not include all independent schools, as most of the joint arrangements were on a costed basis. There was also no regular 'group' meeting of representatives from both sector schools. The LEA officer felt that they were not opposed in principle to cross-sector working, but that it was not currently a high priority within the LEA.

In order to provide further analysis and perhaps identify possible reasons that underlie the present findings, we extracted data from the NFER's Register of Schools, concerning the number of independent schools within each of the LEAs that had responded to the questionnaire. When we compared those LEAs that had told us that they were aware of partnership working within their LEA with those that were not, there were some interesting comparisons between the two groups.

It was apparent that in those LEAs where there was partnership working, the vast majority were LEAs where independent

schools constituted a quarter or more of schools within the local authority area. This is unsurprising, as it could be expected that there may be a positive correlation between the number of independent schools within an LEA and the likelihood of them working with maintained schools in the locality. However, when comparing this with the 42 LEAs that stated that there was no partnership working within their LEA, there were some interesting findings. Six of the LEAs in this group had no independent schools within their local authority, which could explain their absence of partnership

working. There were a further six LEAs where approximately a fifth of their schools were independent and were not involved in any collaboration with maintained schools within their LEA. It is worth noting that there were a further 17 LEAs where over a quarter of the schools within their locality were independent schools and yet the LEA reported that there was no evidence of cross-sector working between schools. This suggests that factors other than the proportion of independent schools within an LEA influence the likelihood of partnership activities.

## 4. Use of school facilities

Respondents were asked whether schools within their LEA (maintained or independent) shared facilities with each other. Various arrangements were reported. Most commonly, respondents said maintained schools in their LEA used independent schools' facilities (11 instances). Independent schools using maintained schools' facilities and reciprocal arrangements between independent and maintained schools were each reported in five instances.

Ten respondents said curriculum facilities were shared (e.g. art facilities, music facilities and computer rooms) and ten said sports facilities were shared (e.g. squash courts, swimming pools and athletic tracks). Other facilities, including school chapels, theatres and accommodation, were shared less often, but it may be that fewer schools have such facilities available to share.

### Example 2

One LEA officer spoke about a number of opportunities to share facilities between different sector schools within her LEA. Where sharing did take place, it tended to be independent schools that shared their facilities and maintained schools that shared their practice. Sports and drama facilities tended to be those most frequently accessed by other schools. There had also been an arrangement whereby an independent school had created a nature trail, which they then encouraged local maintained schools to use. Another example concerned an independent school that had wanted to observe good practice in literacy and the LEA had arranged that with a maintained school. The availability and accessing of facilities was encouraged through regular termly meetings with the director of education and headteachers of schools in both sectors. There was also a fortnightly newsletter, published

within the LEA, to which anyone could contribute and which was an effective means of communication between schools.

In some instances, there may be little sharing of facilities between independent and maintained schools, simply because the same facilities are available within each sector. One LEA officer commented:

*In this area, there is an independent special school. Because of the nature of the school and its specialisations, it may be difficult for maintained schools to benefit from using the facilities. The LEA also has a maintained school for 3–19 year olds which has similar facilities, e.g. the independent school has a hydrotherapy pool, but the maintained school also has one, so if a pupil from a maintained school needed to use one, they would use the facilities at the maintained special school rather than the independent one because it would be cheaper.*

One LEA officer was also keen to point out a misconception that independent schools are always better equipped than maintained schools. This LEA had at least one maintained school that shared its facilities with one or more independent schools. Another interviewee spoke about independent schools sharing facilities only with those that were willing to pay. However, it seemed that in other LEAs, albeit a small number, arrangements to share facilities were based on reciprocity, rather than any form of charging.

The point was also raised, in one LEA, that parents who are paying for their child to receive their education through an independent school may not wish them to access facilities or services provided through maintained schools.

## 5. Partnership activities

As mentioned in Chapter 3, over a quarter of the respondents to the LEA survey (22 out of 77) indicated that there currently was, or had been in the past, evidence of partnership activity between independent and maintained schools within their LEA. This is further explored in the following sections.

### 5.1 Government funded

Ten of the 22 respondents indicated that they had submitted applications for project funding under the Government's Independent –State Schools Partnership programme. Seven of these reported that the outcome of their bids had been successful. The following are examples of the projects mentioned that had received funding (each example was cited by one LEA):

- Information and Communications Technology
- sixth form conference
- arts project
- environmental project
- key skills project for teachers.

#### Example 3

As a result of information provided by one of the LEAs, we were able to speak to a deputy headteacher in a maintained school involved in partnership working with a local independent school. He outlined a number of ways in which the schools had collaborated. The maintained school was a large technology college, which collaborated with a smaller independent school over a two year period, for which they received Government funding. During the first year of the project, they organised a number of activities, which pupils and teachers from the independent school were invited to attend. These included:

- joint speakers
- joint staff training
- first aid courses.

In the second year, the collaboration was extended to focus on the transition from key stage 4 to key stage 5. This involved inviting both sets of year 10 pupils to attend activities that would assist them in making their post-16 choices, such as visits to the local university and pooling staff knowledge regarding University Central Administration Service (UCAS) applications. The project was jointly managed initially, but became more the responsibility of the maintained school during the second year of the project. It was felt that both school timetables offered little flexibility with which to arrange joint events. Communication between the two schools was facilitated via the head of the sixth form in each school. This usually involved regular meetings, which would be used to outline joint activities over the coming year. The meetings would then be followed up by telephone calls. The maintained school also had an arrangement with a local preparatory school, which allowed them use of their sports hall, which was a costed arrangement. When asked what the benefits of collaboration between schools in both sectors were, the interviewee felt it made sense to pool resources as it boosted numbers and made certain trips or events more viable.

### 5.2 Not Government funded

Partnership activity not receiving Government funding was reported by 16 LEAs. This can be compared with the ten LEAs that reported making an application for Government financed project work, of which seven were successful (see section 5.1). The most frequently cited methods of funding other than government finance were:



- maintained schools' budgets
- independent schools' budgets
- local authority resources.

These sources of funding were each cited by eight LEAs.

Other sources of funding highlighted in one or two cases included business or individual sponsorship and charitable sources.

In most of the cases where LEA officers highlighted the existence of non-Government funded project work, very few of the schools involved in these activities also had projects funded by the Government's partnership programme. Follow-up telephone conversations with LEA officers revealed that in some cases individuals were not aware of the Government funding available for such partnership activity or the criteria that needed to be satisfied in order to submit a bid.

Respondents highlighted a range of examples of collaborative project work between schools within their LEAs. Joint projects related to **curriculum and enrichment** activities were the most frequently cited. These included art and drama projects. **Teacher training and development** and **higher education and student support** were also areas that had been targeted by independent and maintained schools in their project work with each other. These included activities such as joint INSET days and higher education recruitment fairs, respectively.

One LEA, which did not submit a questionnaire but which did offer supplementary information, identified areas of joint project work similar to those mentioned above. They also reported school collaboration on the purchasing of in-service training and advice on special needs issues.

These findings demonstrate the breadth and diversity of the types of projects in which schools from both sectors had participated.

Although each of the examples was cited by a small number of LEAs, the evidence suggested that where partnership working existed, it provided opportunities for schools to exercise creativity and innovation in their approaches to collaborative work.

When asked about the duration of projects, the majority of respondents indicated that activities tended to run for at least one year or longer. There were slightly more responses indicating that the management of projects had been the joint responsibility of schools in both sectors rather than being solely attributable to one sector in particular.

Twelve out of the 16 respondents felt that the schools would continue with collaborative activities upon cessation of the current projects.

### 5.3 The impact of partnership activities

LEA officers also identified some of the positive impacts the partnership activities had produced. The following were the most frequently cited benefits from the various collaborative ventures:

- increased communication between maintained and independent schools
- improvement in pupil achievement
- dissemination of good practice.

One principal advisor acknowledged there had been '[a] significant raising of awareness of the work and achievement of both sectors' as a result of partnership working within the LEA and a senior advisor contacted by telephone revealed that collaboration provided 'a useful cross fertilisation of teaching ideas'. This interviewee also went on to say how useful it was to see how other schools work. As mentioned in Chapter 3, she felt that there was often a misconception that independent schools perhaps had fewer problems than their maintained counterparts, which was

not necessarily the case. In fact there could be considerable benefits acquired through accessing each other's knowledge and skills. Another LEA officer felt that each of the different sets of professionals had a lot they could learn from each other. He went on to say:

*We should be able to make the most of the expertise each other has and give the highest possible quality experiences to all pupils and meet their individual needs.*

When respondents were asked who had benefited from the projects or activities

undertaken, the most frequently cited beneficiaries were teachers and pupils (see Tables 5.1 and 5.2). One LEA was keen to emphasise that equality of opportunities was available to all children, regardless of the type of school in which they were principally educated. The curriculum manager reported:

*Every effort is made to give teachers from independent schools access to development opportunities and children access to events, such as sports, drama, dance, etc.*

**Table 5.1 Groups who LEA officers thought had benefited from partnership activities: activities not supported by Government funding**

	Yes	Number of responses		
		No	Not sure	No response
Pupils in maintained schools	14	–	–	2
Pupils in independent schools	12	1	–	3
Teachers in maintained schools	12	–	–	4
Teachers in independent schools	11	–	–	5
Local community	7	2	–	7
Local businesses	2	3	1	10
<b>N = 16</b>				

*A series of single response items.*

*Based on responses from LEA officers who indicated that schools in their authority had participated in partnership activities that were not supported by Government funding.*

**Table 5.2 Groups who LEA officers thought had benefited from partnership activities: activities that were supported by Government funding**

	Yes	Number of responses		
		No	Not sure	No response
Pupils in maintained schools	6	–	1	–
Pupils in independent schools	6	–	1	–
Teachers in maintained schools	5	–	2	–
Teachers in independent schools	5	–	2	–
Local community	1	–	2	4
Local businesses	1	–	2	4
<b>N = 7</b>				

*A series of single response items.*

*Based on responses from LEA officers who indicated that schools in their authority had participated in partnership activities that were supported by Government funding.*

## 6. Conclusions

Previous reports and evaluations of partnership working between schools in the maintained and independent sectors have offered recommendations, information and examples of the extent of collaboration between the two sectors. On the whole, this research identified a general lack of awareness, at LEA level, of collaborative projects between maintained and independent schools. However, there was evidence to suggest that there was some level of communication between the two sectors and that there was potential for future developments in this particular area. The key findings from the questionnaire data and additional information obtained from LEA officers are set out below.

- ◆ There were varying degrees of what could be described as partnership working. In some cases, collaboration was simply between the LEA and independent schools and tended to focus on exchanging ideas, rather than more active involvement. This included advice on quality assurance issues, buying into training programmes and other such contractual arrangements for service provision. In other cases, LEA officers reported a more active involvement between independent and maintained schools within their LEA and highlighted evidence of collaborative projects between schools in the two sectors.
- ◆ Just over half of the respondents were unaware of partnership activity between maintained and independent schools within their LEA. There are a number of possible reasons for this.
  - The responsibility for partnership awareness falls to a variety of individuals, fulfilling different roles, within local authorities. Respondents often reported conversing with other colleagues in order to confirm or supplement their own levels of knowledge before responding. Not providing a main point of contact within an LEA with primary responsibility for this type of partnership working may in fact hinder or prevent the development and maximisation of inter-sector partnership working within a local authority.
- ◆ There is a concern that schools may not be sharing information about collaborative activities with LEA officers. This could present problems in the future, especially if there is a more concerted drive towards increasing and developing such activities. It would certainly make it more difficult to monitor and evaluate partnership work at the national or local level. In addition, where there is a lack of effective communication between the maintained and independent sectors, it may be difficult for schools to access information about funding options available to them.
- ◆ Information from telephone conversations with LEA officers highlighted some of the most common reasons why they felt there was a lack of partnership working between independent and maintained schools, notably:
  - low priority for such partnership working within schools/LEAs
  - inflexibility of school timetables/ curriculum
  - lack of regular meetings/ communication between sector representatives
  - misconceptions of school needs between sectors
  - lack of coordination at LEA level.

- ◆ A lack of partnership working was not necessarily associated with a shortage of independent schools within local authority areas. It became apparent that even in some LEAs where a quarter or more of schools were independent, there was no awareness of any collaboration between schools. This could be attributed to the fact that, as previously mentioned, LEA officers were simply not aware of collaborative activities, or that partnership working between the two sectors was not a priority for schools at the time.
- ◆ Where the sharing of facilities occurred, it tended to be maintained schools using independent schools' facilities. The most commonly accessed shared facilities tended to be sports or curriculum resources.
- ◆ A small number of LEA officers felt that there were several misconceptions with regard to independent schools, e.g. that they have better facilities or fewer problems than maintained schools.
- ◆ Of those respondents who stated there was some level of partnership working between schools within their LEA, the majority reported that projects tended to be financed via sources other than Government funding. Schools' own budgets and the LEA were the most frequently accessed methods of funding in these cases. This could possibly be attributed to a lack of awareness of the existence of Government funding and/or of how to access it.
- ◆ Some examples of the diversity of non-Government funded projects in which

schools were currently involved included Gifted and Talented work, joint INSET days and summer challenge activities. The most frequently reported benefits of such joint working were increased communication between sectors, greater levels of pupil achievement and the sharing of good practice. Teachers and pupils both in maintained and independent schools were identified as those most likely to experience the benefits of collaborative work.

Overall, this research found that there were benefits to teachers and students both in the maintained and independent sectors where collaborative activities were in place. Where LEA officers reported being aware of partnership work, it was more frequently financed by sources other than Government funding. With these findings in mind, we suggest that national bodies and LEAs should consider the following points:

- ◆ the feasibility of having a named individual within each LEA for coordinating collaborative activities between the maintained and independent sectors
- ◆ the feasibility of independent schools within each LEA having a representative with a remit to liaise with his/her LEA counterpart concerning collaborative activities
- ◆ the range of strategies that might be utilised effectively to raise awareness of the Government funding available to support collaborative activities.

## Appendix: Respondents' current role details

Job title	Number of responses
Director/assistant director	13
School improvement officer	6
Head of standards and effectiveness division	4
Principal advisor/chief advisor	4
Principal inspector/chief inspector	4
Senior inspector/advisor	4
Advisory service manager/head of advisory service	2
Manager of information and research/planning	2
Manager of schools support	2
Performance (data) manager for schools	2
Advisory officer	1
Assistant education officer	1
Business development manager	1
Coordinating advisor for primary education	1
Early years advisor	1
Education partnership assistant	1
External funding manager	1
Head of lifelong learning	1
Head of school services	1
Manager of pupil services	1
Planning and resources officer	1
Statistical officer	1
Primary link inspector	1
Senior education officer	1
Special needs manager	1
No response	18
Uncodeable	1
<b>N</b>	<b>77</b>

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The LGA Educational Research Programme is carried out by the NFER. The research projects cover topics and perspectives that are of special interest to LEAs. All the reports are published and disseminated by NFER, with separate executive summaries.

The summaries are available free of charge both on paper and on the NFER website – [www.nfer.ac.uk](http://www.nfer.ac.uk) AAA

## A selection of recent publications arising from the LGA Educational Research Programme

### School Partnerships in Action: A Case Study of West Sussex Specialist Schools (LGA Research Report 36)

*Sarah Aiston, Peter Rudd and Lisa O'Donnell*

Schools working in partnership will be an important part of the educational landscape over the next few years. The overall aim of this study, which involved 11 Specialist Schools, was to provide evidence on the development and outcomes to date of Specialist School partnerships, the processes by which they work and the strategic co-ordinating roles of the local education authority (LEA), the TCT and other bodies. It also reflects on the benefits and challenges of being part of a Specialist School network, of working in partnership and the transferability of this type of network to other educational contexts.

Published in 2002

ISBN 1 903880 37 8

Price: £8.00

### Teaching Assistants in Schools: The Current State of Play (LGA Research Report 34)

*Barbara Lee*

A National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) review of literature on the impact of teaching assistants in schools has shown that they are playing increasingly significant roles in supporting teachers and pupils. The report provides an overview of existing research on the roles of teaching assistants in schools, looks at the issues arising from the ways they are employed and deployed and identifies areas for further study.

Published in 2002

ISBN 1 903880 33 5

Price: £10.00

### The Impact of School Size and Single-sex Education on Performance (LGA Research Report 33)

*Thomas Spielhofer, Lisa O'Donnell, Tom Benton, Sandie Schagen and Ian Schagen*

The publication of school 'league tables' has stimulated much debate about the best environment for fostering pupils' learning and development. There are arguments in favour of small schools and large schools and, although most comprehensive schools are coeducational, it is sometimes claimed that single-sex education is beneficial, particularly for girls. A review of previous research revealed very little robust evidence on these issues relating to England. As a result, NFER researchers examined the impact of single-sex education and school size on pupil performance and opportunities, using national value-added datasets.

Published in 2002

ISBN 1 903880 29 7

Price: £12.00

### A Revolution in the Use of Data?

#### The LEA Role in Data Collection, Analysis and Use and Its Impact on Pupil Performance (LGA Research Report 29)

*Peter Rudd and Deborah Davies*

In recent years, the use of pupil performance data for target setting and raising standards of attainment in schools has become increasingly important. The report examines how schools and LEAs can work together to make best use of pupil performance data, while giving examples of good practice. It makes a number of recommendations for both LEAs and school staff.

Published in 2002

ISBN 1 903880 20 3

Price: £12.00

### The Impact of Specialist and Faith Schools on Performance (LGA Research Report 28)

*Sandie Schagen, Deborah Davies, Peter Rudd and Ian Schagen*

Specialist and faith schools tend to be a popular choice with parents, obtaining good results in national league tables. Questions are sometimes asked as to whether this is due to their status as specialist/faith schools, or to other factors. This study provides a clear and comprehensive critical review of the relevant literature and assesses the effectiveness (in value-added terms) of specialist and faith schools.

Published in 2002

ISBN 1 903880 19 X

Price: £10.00

### Multi-agency Working: A Detailed Study (LGA Research Report 26)

*Mary Atkinson, Anne Wilkin, Alison Stott, Paul Doherty and Kay Kinder*

This report gives the findings from the final phases of a study of multi-agency working. It includes different models: their rationale and development; their impact; and the challenges and key factors in the success of multi-agency initiatives.

This research is clearly linked to the current Government agenda on 'joined-up thinking', and is therefore of particular interest to personnel within Education, Health and Social Services agencies.

Published in 2002

ISBN 1 903880 13 0

Price: £19.50

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